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the right, under a shed attached to a stone building—the stable of the inn, of the legend quoted at the beginning of this chapter. The ox and ass are introduced, for the first time since the fourth-century sarcophagus at Ravenna. Joseph also is represented sitting on the ground in the right-hand corner of the picture. We have seen that Joseph, the protector of the Virgin and the guardian of the infancy of our Lord, is introduced into the very earliest pictures of the subject; but, for some unexplained reason, in the Byzantine and mediæval designs he very seldom appears. With the first dawn of the renaissance he is restored to the design, and henceforward is almost always included. The first king kneels; he has laid his crown on the ground, an incident whose significance is obvious, and kisses the Child's foot. The Child holds the gift with his left hand, and blesses the donor with his right. The other two kings—tall and dignified figures—stand behind the first. On the left are introduced two horses and an attendant, who is in an attitude as if about to strike one of them, and reminds us of the similar passage in the fourteenth-century ivories already mentioned. A mountainous background is indicated. Our woodcut (Fig. 5) is reduced from the engraving by Ranalli.

A picture by Gentile Faleriano (1370—1470) in the Florence Gallery places the Virgin on the left of the design, in front of a dilapidated building with a penthouse porch to it. Two female attendants are introduced behind the Virgin, who are opening and looking into the covered vessel which the first king has just presented. Joseph stands beside the Virgin. The ox and ass are seen behind. The first king not only kneels, but has one hand on the ground, that is, he has prostrated himself. The second king bows, and has his hand to his turban, ready to remove it and kneel in turn. The third king is still standing, and a page unbuckles his spur. On the right is a crowd of attendants, with horses, dogs, and a camel. In the background is introduced the journey of the kings. The sacred group is full of beauty, but the rest of the picture is inferior in interest and beauty, and looks rather as if thrown in to fill up a large canvas.

A picture by Fra Angelico (A.D. 1387—1455), in the same gallery, gives us an original conception of the subject, which either originated, or was an early example of, a new mode of treating it, that was followed by many subsequent artists. The centre of the picture is occupied by a large but simple stone building, with a thatched roof. A simple rectangular doorway, cut through the plain wall, forms a kind of framework about the Virgin and Child, and the dark interior of the building throws up the figures. The Virgin is seated with her full face to the spectator, as in the catacomb paintings, and in the mosaics from Rome and Ravenna, before mentioned. The Child is seated on her knee. The first king kneels, so that the spectator sees his right profile, and kisses the Child's foot. The other two kings do not follow him in file, as in the early pictures, nor are grouped as in the fourteenth-century pictures, but are separated, and stand one on the right and the other on the left. The attendants are grouped chiefly on the left of the picture, but there are two or three on the right; and with one of these latter Joseph, standing on the Virgin's left hand, converses (Fig. 6).

Another picture by Fra Angelico, in the same gallery, presents another original treatment of the subject. The Virgin is seated on the right under a penthouse. The moment chosen is different from the usual one. The first king seems to have paid his worship and made his offering, and stands in the background conversing with Joseph. It is the second king who is in the act of adoration, taking the Child's foot in one hand and kissing it: while the third king, with a beautiful youthful face (which seems to have inspired later painters of the subject), kneels on one knee, waiting for his turn. Other figures are introduced on the left of the picture, and in the background.

(*To be continued.*)

SIMPLETONS.

S. Luke Fildes, Pinxt. C. Cousin, Sculpt.

AS an example of the work of one of the younger painters of the English school, a contemporary of George H. Boughton, the late Frederick Walker, and other artists of that class, Mr. Fildes's 'Simpletons' is very pleasing. The two lovers in the boat have found a cosy nook by the river's side, and are drifting into the current among the rushes and water-lilies. The scene sparkles with sunlight, and from the action of the young couple it is evident that they do not shun the light, but rather the intrusion of curious eyes as they float upon the tide. The maiden turns her head away as the tender words fall from her lover's lips; the book rests in her lap unread; and her left hand is extended over the water, half unconsciously, as if to stir the mirror-like surface which reflects the emotions of her fair face. The subject is an old one, but credit is due to the artist for having infused so large a measure of romance and quiet grace into his lovers. The drawing is done with great precision, and the engraver in reproducing the subject has very happily caught the inspiration of the painter. The picture was exhibited in the Exhibition of the Royal Academy in 1873.

Mr. Fildes does not confine his attention entirely to these love-scenes. His great work entitled 'Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward'—"dumb, wet, silent horrors! Sphinxes set up against that dead wall, and none likely to be at the pains of solving them until the general overthrow," which was in the English department of the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia, represents another and more powerful motive and a bolder aim in Art. An English critic in a notice of this marvellous picture of beggars and tramps who stand shivering in the driving snow-storm at the door of the work-house as they await their turn for admission, said in substance that it is the most notable piece of realism that had been exhibited in a long time, and that the lines quoted from Dickens fairly described the mode in which the painter had approached his subject. He said, further, that the artist had shirked nothing; he had set down the facts as he found them, and had, as a result, produced the startling impression of all wayward and unlovely reality. These deformed and wretched creatures, who wait for admission to a miserable resting-place, are only admissible into Art that is indifferent to beauty. In this painting, unlike his 'Simpletons,' he has made no attempt to make his picture pretty, but has left it weird and repelling; and yet for this very reason it fascinates the spectator in spite of the misery which is revealed in its story. Art of this kind does not interpret the highest degree of pictorial beauty, but it teaches a lesson and always commands respect.

More lovable, and yet full of sad thoughts, was Mr. Fildes's 'Widower' in the last Exhibition, representing the interior of a homely cottage. The mother is dead, and the father, who has just returned from his daily labour, clay-stained and weary, is seated and holds in his arms a sick child; three younger children are playing on the floor, the baby scrambling after an apple, while an elder sister stands near the open door through which the bright sunshine finds its way. This subject is simple in its character, and touches the heart as a story drawn from real life by its pathos and sentiment.

In studying these several pictures by Fildes, one is struck with the remarkable versatility of his style: In one we have a tender touch of Nature, a gleam of sunshine, as it were, in which two young hearts are revelling, without a shadow in their pathway. Again he gives us the dark side of Nature in a picture which teaches a painfully moral lesson; and, as a writer has very justly said, the state of things he represents in it ought rather to be removed than perpetuated, and its introduction into Art, which should be permanent, is rather a matter of regret. Finally, his striking picture of the 'Widower,' a story which is told with extraordinary power, and one which from its simplicity and thoroughness, as well as the pathos of its motive, will awaken lasting interest in the human mind.

SIMPLETONS.